COLUMBIA RIVER FISHERMEN'S PROTECTIVE UNION

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# Fights over Fish: Those were the Days

Fish fights have been a colorful part of Oregon's salmon fishing industry since the 1880s, when rapid expansion in kinds of gear used to harvest salmon on the Columbia River led to the first awareness of declining resource availability.

Initially, fish fights were acts of violence between groups of commercial fishermen. The legislature was also one of the battle grounds, and since 1908 the public, in deciding some 21 fisheries-related initiatives and referendums, have been arbitrators of the conflicts between fishermen.

The early fish fights were between groups of gillnetters and trapmen, gillnetters and fishwheel operators and upriver and downriver fishing interests. Since 1910 fish fights have increasingly focused on the relations between sport anglers and commercial fishermen.

Please turn to page 5

# Sally the Salmon Says...

"Good grief! Do they really think that fish traps are the answer to saving salmon? They've already been tried years back, and were found to be no more selective and just as 'murderous' as gillnets, so why in the world should we ruin an industry and bring back something that provides no better protection for fish? It's just plain politics!"

## On deck

10 Bristol Bay fishermen reel in record numbers of fish, but only at sixty cents a pound

Lower river Gillnetters use innovative net decoy to help shy away seals and sea lions

Florida voters could vote to ban gillnets in 1994 if enough signatures are gathered

ON THE COVER: An upriver fishermean delivers a nice one to the tender "Inez" in the late 1960s.



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#### FOREWORD

The Columbia River Gillnetter is the pilot of the Lower Columbia River Commercial Fishing Industry, keeping fishermen and the public in touch with today's important issues. The advertisements which appear make it possible to publish this paper, and we hope you will, in return, patronize and thank the people who support our livelihood.

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## The State of the Union: An Uncertain Future

was a banner year for sturgeon fishermen on the Columbia River, both sport and commercial.

Some have gone as far as to call it the "year of the sturgeon."

In downtown Astoria, anglers were catching good-sized sturgeon right off the pier, using a homemade lasso over the pole and down the line, cinching it behind the gills and hauling him up on the dock.

This activity was something new for the Astoria waterfront, as no one could remember catching sturgeon right off the dock, without a boat.

Gillnetters, meanwhile, working with a recently scaled-down size limit, landed just 6,600 white sturgeon in 1993, while sportfishermen caught more than 40,000. The new maximum sturgeon size for both gillnetters and sport anglers is 5.5 feet, down from six. Sportfishermen can catch 42-inchers while commercial fishers must make do with a 48-inch minimum, as before.

The Columbia River must be blessed with talented anglers, as sport fishers caught more than **six times** as many sturgeon as their gillnetter counterparts in 1993, yet they say *gillnets* are the real "killers." I'd say hooks and lines have done pretty darn well.

But when gillnetters started catching a few sturgeon during their brief season, the brakes come on, along with delivery limits at major buyers.

When is the last time we saw something like that?

Some said Fish and Game told the buyers to "hold off" on sturgeon, while others said processors were simply plugged with pounds of frozen unsold and unprocessed product.

Whatever the reason, most gillnetters were put on sturgeon delivery limits at the start of the second week of fishing, some as low as 150-200 pounds a week.

Anglers also kept pace this year when it came to coho, as both gillnetters and Buoy 10 sports caught about 20,000 silvers this year, when only two years ago gillnetters caught 37,500 coho in a 2-day season in 1991.

The commercial salmon catch on the river was 17,200 chinook, with at least 75 percent caught upriver in zones four and five. Sportsmen caught some 5,000 salmon out of a Compact-set quota of 15,000.

You know it's been a weird year when some fishermen can count the number of early fall chinook salmon they caught on both hands.

El Nino has taken a major toll on the fish feeding conditions in the Pacific Ocean, and the 7-year drought has turned the lower Columbia more brackish than ever.

And meanwhile, back at Sea Lion Rocks in east Astoria, our friends are basking in the Indian summer, munching away at salmon all the while. At night, the seals and the sea lions have a heydey ripping salmon out of nets as fast, or probably much faster, than fishermen can catch them.

Not much fishing was done on the lower thirty miles or so of the river because of these pesky mammals, and fishermen here had a disastrous season, except for the lucky ones who happened to catch (and sell) a few legal sturgeon the first week.

Finally, as the Columbia River Fishermen's Union marks its 108th year as one of the oldest, if not the oldest, incorporations in the state of Oregon, Union membership dues have dwindled almost to nothing.

It's time for fishermen to realize that it's now or never. We are facing serious times, and if we lose our Union, we simply won't have a chance. There's just too many people against us, and no one is going to speak up for us.

We're on our own, and the Union is our only voice in a sea of screaming sportsmen and environmentalists who have been itching to get rid of gillnetters for years.

There are many fishermen who do fairly well on the river and don't bother to support their own industry and pay their dues, and they're really cutting their own throat. Even a partial payment would help out to get us through these tough times.

Office hours have already been cut back to just one day a week, and the office may close altogether after the first of the year if things don't change, and that would really be a shame.

So pull out your checkbook before it's too late.

—Don Riswick



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#### Story of the Snake

Idaho's Snake River has a long and colorful history, and many factors have contributed to the decline of its oncethriving salmon runs.

The Black Canyon Dam was built on the Columbia River back in 1924 with no fish ladders. The dam, an immense block of concrete soaring some 90 feet in the air, was solely responsible for killing off the entire Payette River runs of both spring and fall chinook salmon, as well as coho, blueback and spring and summer steelhead.

The very design of the Black Canyon could have easily accommodated fish ladders for full pool level, as well as fishway tunnels through the dam itself when pool levels were low.

The Black Canyon also killed off the last strain of the July run of the famous "Royal Chinook," the finest canning salmon on the river.

In 1958, 1961 and 1967 the Idaho Power Company built three dams on the upper Snake River system, all as big as the Grand Coulee and all without fish ladders. These dams have greatly contributed to the decline of fish returning to the Snake, even though officials say they contribute less than two percent of the Northwest's power.

Since 1958, the first year of operation for an upper Snake River dam, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has recorded steady decreases in Snake river runs. One would think there was no coho left in the Columbia, but that's far from the truth. In 1993, more than 85,000 sockeye made it over Bonneville, but only a handful made it to the Snake.

To restore Snake River fish runs you have to go to the source of the problem: dams. A good start would be a gradual phase out of the Hells Canyon, Oxbow and Brownlee dams at the upper reaches of the Snake. Fish need cold water, and these dams are nothing but giant hot tubs. Summer water temperatures here can top 70 degrees.

Now the "mad scientists" want to bring back fish traps — that's a laugh. Or maybe we should cry. It's 1994, gentlemen,

-Continued on page 34



TALK ABOUT STURGEON — Here is a 1500-lb. white sturgeon caught in the Snake River in 1928, the second largest sturgeon ever caught in the Northwest. The largest was an 1800-pounder taken from the Fraser River in British Columbia. Several sturgeon in the 900-1,000 pound range have been taken on the Columbia over the years, but are considered rare.

#### The Season of the Sturgeon

Lower Columbia River Gillnetters set their nets for the opening of the early fall season on Wednesday, September 22.

Although salmon were few and far between for most fishermen on the lower river, some gillnetters in the Astoria area loaded their nets with sturgeon, with several deliveries of 5-6,000 pounds and more recorded.

"If it wasn't for sturgeon, I wouldn't have caught anything," said one Astoria gillnetter.

Some major processors set a limit of 200 pounds of sturgeon per boat per week as the season progressed and the sturgeon stacked up, but most big catches on the lower river were caught during the first week of fishing.

Gillnetters netted a total of 6,653 white and 2,700 green sturgeon this season, up slightly from the 4,740 and 1,910 caught last year, respectively.

But in the paltry 17 days fished in 1993, gillnetters have caught only a total of 17,200 chinook and 20,140 coho, while sportfishermen, who ended their season November 1, took some 40,000 white sturgeon, 20,000 coho and 5,000 chinook from the river.

The Youngs Bay fishery, which ended Halloween night, brought in some 16,000 coho and only 350 chinook. While last year's coho numbers were about the same, bay fishermen caught some 1,200 chinook in 1992. In 1991, just two seasons ago, gillnetters in the bay reeled in more than 81,000 silvers. the best catch on the books.

Once again, degraded ocean feeding conditions were blamed for the poor showing.



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#### Fish Fights

The overt issue sparking most fish fights has been the question of what were the best means for conservation of the fisheries resource. Beneath this facade of conservation were social and economic issues of resource use and allocation. Conservation is a resource management philosophy which emphasizes wise-use of resources without waste.

The history of Oregon fish fights reveals, however, that conservation has been used as a political wedge for one group to take a larger share of the fisheries resource from competitors. Conservation, more than a process of resource protection for the future, was as much a process of resource allocation among competing uses and users.

Nearly one hundred years of historical records on various fish fights reveals no consistent pattern. Fish fights reflect the larger philosophic issues which continue to be debated in American society.

Issues such as whether decisions should be made by elites or by broad participation, too many fishermen and too few fish, fish for food or fish for fun, allocation of rivers and streams among competing uses, and the meaning of the facts which explain a situation have all interacted to make fisheries management a complex social and economic problem, not just simply one of resource conservation.

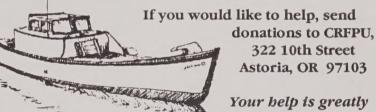
The first fish fights on the Columbia River between trapmen and gillnetters, and upriver and downriver fishermen. These conflicts, as well as being fought

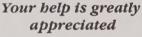
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# Support your Union and the Columbia River Gillnetter!

The Columbia River Fishermen's Union would like to remind Lower Columbia commercial fishermen that we depend solely upon annual membership dues and individual donations to keep us afloat and in touch with the many important issues facing the commercial fishing industry today.

The Columbia River Gillnetter is the only remaining publication on the west coast devoted exclusively to gillnetting. We have been making a difference for more than 25 years, but our continued existence is threatened by increasing production and mailing costs. Now more than ever, we need a voice to represent our side of the issue, and the Gillnetter is our only contact with fishermen, lawmakers and the general public.







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# GOOD GRIEF! They're talking fish traps again

A team of scientists has drafted a plan to save declining Snake River salmon stocks which calls for the phase-out of all Columbia River commercial gillnet fishing by the year 2002.

Instead, live fish traps or other technique which, the proposal says, would "safely release" protected fish back into the river, would once again be used to collect salmon.

Fish traps, always a source of controversy, have not been used on the Columbia since 1948, when "fixed appliances" on both the Oregon and Washington sides of the river were outlawed by a majority vote of the people. Campaign advertisements to ban the traps called them "murderous," and some 274,000 voters out of a total of 460,000 agreed.

Now, nearly fifty years later, a group of seven scientists, appointed by the National Marine Fisheries Service, wants to bring them back.

After a government buyout of the existing Columbia River gillnet permits, the plan recommends a "selective harvest" of salmon, as well as a reduction of the fall chinook harvest to less than 50 percent of the current levels. Some troll permits from the Canadian border to Oregon's Humbug mountain would also be retired through buyouts.

"The idea is simply ridiculous," said one Columbia River Gillnetter. "Oregon voters already rejected fish traps in the '92 election, and here we go again. And if they buy permits only, what'll we do with our boats?"

Bob Eaton, director of Salmon for All, called a mandatory permit-only buyout



"repugnant," and said it would do anything but assure a harvest reduction.

The scientists also called for the improvement of barging young salmon around the deadly hydroelectric dams on their way to the Pacific, as well as a two-or three-year study to determine if water flow releases at the Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River significantly aid migrating young salmon.

The study results will have to be very encouraging, however, because this group of scientists believes regular reser-

voir drawdowns would have a "drastic effect" on barge traffic, irrigation and, especially, the cost and production of hydroelectric power.

For years, commercial and sportfishermen, as well as so-called environmentalists have begged for changes in the operation of the eight dams on the Columbia and Snake river systems to increase the survival of salmon.

Some groups have called for their complete removal, but these scientists have made no such recommendation in their plan, even though it is widely accepted that deadly dam turbines kill at least two-thirds of the salmon attempting to pass through them.

"There is no way you can get back to a natural system," says Don Bevan, chairman of the group. "The Columbia Basin has been altered since the time of Lewis and Clark. There is no natural basin to get back to," he says.

"Trying to improve in-water survival may take a very long time and be very, very expensive. And right now, we can't guarantee that fixing the dams will work," Bevan added.

The scientists also talked about improving spawning habitat for young fish throughout the Columbia basin, which would include reducing the number of predators such as squawfish. It could also affect farming and logging practices in the Northwest.

The proposal, released last month, will be open for public comment until December 6. The fisheries service is due to adopt a final, complete recovery plan in about two years.

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#### Fish patrol deters poachers

Salmon poaching on the Columbia River has become a high-risk activity, thanks to a 56-foot Washington Dept. of Fisheries patrol boat which cruised the river this summer to protect spawning and migrating salmon.

Working from the *G.H. Corliss*, the patrol team coordinated boat and ground patrols, aerial surveillance and other

day-to-day operations.

This is the second year of a three-year Bonneville Power Administration-funded program to enforce Columbia River habitat and harvest laws to help depleted sockeye and chinook salmon runs.

Highly visible law enforcement helps build public awareness of the situation.

The G.H. Corliss traveled this June from Astoria to Portland, all the way to Redfish Lake in Central Idaho, the spawning ground of the endangered Snake River sockeye salmon.

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#### What next! Sea otters threatening California shellfish fisheries

SAN FRANCISCO — Those lovable little creatures that won the hearts of millions of Americans after the Prince William Sound oil spill are not faring as well with California shellfish fishermen.

Ron Jameson, research biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, says that the numbers of "threatened" California mainland sea otters are growing at a rapid rate, up nearly seven percent from 1992 figures. The spring 1993 count was the highest ever, according to Jameson.

Not only are they expanding their number, their also expanding their territory, moving north to Tunitas Creek and south to Pismo Beach from their typical central coast habitat.

Sea otters love to dine on sea urchins, lobsters, shrimp, crab, squid, clams and abalone — the mainstays of the California commercial fishing fleet. And, fishermen say, if there's more sea otters, there's less seafood for them to catch, and ultimately less seafood for the consumer on the market.

"Basically, it's a slow death for my fishery and the fishermen I represent," says Bruce Steele, a Santa Barbara-based sea urchin diver and member of the Advisory Committee to the Sea Otter Recovery Team. "The otters will spread, probably clear to the Mexico border," he says. At the recovery team meeting in San Francisco this June, Steele was also told that current efforts to relocate the sea otters to other parts of the state were being discontinued.

"There aren't going to be anymore shellfish fisheries. That's not to say any species will be extinct, they will just be below any limits humans have set for game management and we will be precluded from use," Steele says. "Somehow in the future we will be using the last commercial abalones in California and losing several shellfish industries worth well in excess of \$10 million a year of renewable resources."

"It's unfortunate, but the public and the government need to make a decision: Does California want sea otters wall-to-wall or does it want sea otters and shell-fish fisheries?" says Diane Pleschner, manager of the California Seafood Council. "If they want both, we have to look at protecting both."

Pete Haaker, associate marine biologist for the California Department of Fish and Game, shares fishermen's concerns. "We'll be returned to a pre-19th century situation in the environment as far as the resource goes," he says. Haaker also says that as populations grow, otters are essentially "helping themselves" to whatever sealife they want to eat, and the state of California is powerless to do a thing about it.

Even though they acknowledge that otters are having a devestating impact on commercial fisheries, preservation groups such as Friends of the Sea Otter do not want to see any zonal management of sea otters until it is fully "recovered" under the Endangered Species Act. That means otter counts would have to reach some 2,850 before the animals could be removed from the list of endangered species. The otter count this year was 2,239.



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#### Sea otter breaks aquarium viewing window

NEWPORT — A lively male sea otter named "Cody" living at the Oregon Coast Aquarium here pried a fiberglass bolt from the pool's floor and took aim at a viewing window and managed to shatter one of three layers of safety glass this summer.

"He hit it exactly right and shattered the window," said Diane Hammond, an employee at the aquarium. Although no water escaped, "It was pretty spectacular," she said.

Cody, 4, is the largest of the three sea otters currently in residence at the new multi-million-dollar aquarium. All three are survivors of Alaska's Prince William Sound oil spill.

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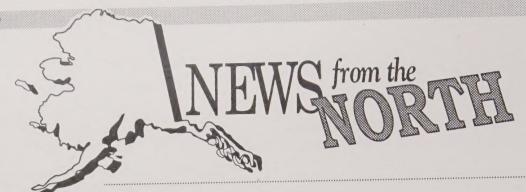
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# Records fall on Bristol Bay at 60 cents a pound

It was a record-breaking year on Alaska's Bristol Bay, but don't tell that to the many fishermen who went home barely breaking even.

A record 39.3 million top-quality wild red salmon were harvested by bay gillnetters this year, surpassing the 37.3 million caught in 1983, the former leader. Nearly five million fish were caught in just one day (July 2).

But the bad news is fishermen received just 60 cents per pound for their catches, which seemed to also be a record — a record low — after getting an average of about \$1.10 in 1992.

"You have to catch a helluva lot of fish to make any money at 60 cents a pound," said one bay fishermen from Seattle. "We were lucky this year, with all the fish, but what about next year?"

As was the case last year, the Egegik district led the way with a 22 million catch, more than half of the total '93 bay catch. Some 1,000 boats crowded into the relatively small Egegik area during the many openings, and many a wild tale can surely be told by the fishermen who braved the wild Egegik boundary line, an experience

certainly not for the meek or timid.

Some Egegik fishermen, during the peak of the run, had a difficult time selling their catches as buyers reached their capacity limit. As a result, numerous spotter pilots reported hundreds of dead salmon on the beaches in the district as fishermen were forced to throw their hard work over the side.

#### "You have to catch a helluva lot of fish to make any money at 60 cents a pound."

The Naknek/Kvichak district, traditionally a high-producer, accounted for just eight million salmon this season, most of them Naknek system fish. The Kvichak district, formerly a top producer on the bay, was unusually weak again this year, and its minimum escapement goal of four million fish was just barely met.

Because of the poor showing in the Kvichak, two rare actions were taken by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game late in the season. On July 16, the Naknek/ Kvichak and Egegik sections were closed to all fishing, then reopened with new boundary lines which put fishermen in the Nak-

nek River in the Naknek/Kvichak district (for only the second time in history) and Egegik gillnetters in a much smaller fishing ground.

Most fishermen felt actions taken that late in the game could hardly help matters much, as many had already packed up for the winter. "Why not do it when there's still a fish left to be caught?" said one.

The Nushagak district had a strong showing this year, as fishermen here netted some 5.4 million reds, nearly twice the number caught in 1992.

Although the 60-cent price brings back 20-year-old numbers, the record red catch still added up to nearly \$150 million, one of the top ten best ex-vessel payouts on the books.

The good news is the large catch of inexpensive top-grade salmon will help wild Bristol Bay sockeye remain competitive on the world market, which in turn will keep the pressure on fish farms, the bay's main competition.

In fact, sources say many fish farm operations in Japan and elsewhere, forced to lower prices to remain competitive in the marketplace, could go bankrupt.

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## Something fishy? Dutch Harbor is number one

DUTCH HARBOR/UNALASKA — For the fifth straight year in a row, commercial fishermen in the Alaskan community of Dutch Harbor/Unalaska landed more fish than any other town in the country.

Seven-hundred thirty-six million pounds were reeled in by fishermen here in 1992. "Dutch" fishermen also had the most valuable total catches in the country last year, some \$194 million worth of fish crossed the docks, a good portion of it a reflection of the high prices paid last year for surimi, made from pollock.

Dutch Harbor/Unalaska, at the heart of the rich North Pacific and Bering Sea fisheries some 800 air miles southwest of Anchorage, is one of the few spots in Alaska which is ice-free year-round. Five shore-based seafood processors which handle salmon, king crab, halibut, cod, tanner crab, sablefish and surimi are the community's largest employers.

#### It's a war over the sockeye on the Susitna River

WASILLA — Sockeye salmon returning to the Susitna River are being intercepted by commercial fishermen in Cook Inlet and the Kenai River before they have a chance to reach their spawning grounds, says a retired Alaska state fisheries biologist.

"We've missed the minimum level of escapement ten out of fifteen years. If you miss the minimum goal that much, you're doing something wrong," says Larry Engel, who is now working with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

In 1979, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game established an annual escapement goal of 200,000 sockeye salmon for the Susitna River, but Alaska state fish biologist Ken Tarbox of Soldotna says that in 1992, just 60,000 sockeye made their way to the Susitna.

"But remember, 200,000 is not a minimum goal, it is our optimal goal," says Tarbox.

Biologists say the problem is that the Cook Inlet fishery is "mixed stock," which means that salmon native to more than one tributary mingle in the inlet's waters before they make their way to the spawning grounds in the North Pacific.

Commercial fishermen who fish for the plentiful Kenai River sockeye are intercepting large numbers of Susitnabound salmon as well, biologists say.

So, Engel says, escapement goals aren't met, and Cook Inlet setnetters, which target Susitna sockeye, suffer.

But Theo Matthews of the United Cook Inlet Drift Association says Susitna setnet fishermen simply want more salmon for themselves, and have joined with the support of the Mat-Su Borough in order to get it.

"They would like any restrictions on us that would get them more salmon for their tourism expansion," he says.

# DECLINING NUMBERS CANCEL CARIBOU HUNT

KING SALMON — Avid Alaska peninsula caribou hunters were disappointed this fall when state and federal game biologists announced declining caribou numbers could not withstand a harvest this year.

The Southern Alaska Peninsula caribou herd, whose range includes the Port Moller, False Pass and Unimak Island areas, has been steadily decreasing in recent years, biologists say. Overgrazing may be responsible.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game have agreed that when the caribou population fell below 2,500, hunting seasons would be stopped. Last January, only 1,920 animals were spotted, and by June of this year less than 1,500 were counted.

Although the caribou herd has a history of boom and bust, (numbers were 500 in 1949 and more than 10,000 in the early 1980s), hunting has been set to keep the herd at 5-6,000 animals.

But, few Alaskan hunters brave the often cold, remote areas where most caribou roam, and as a result, the herd has grown and overgrazed its feeding range.

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# Adrift on Bristol Bay: A harrowing experience

DILLINGHAM — A Bristol Bay setnet fisherman was blown out to sea across Egegik Bay this summer when he attempted to row his disabled 17-foot aluminum skiff to shore against a strong ebb tide.

Christopher Norbut, 41, who lives in King Salmon, was setnetting for salmon on the Goose Point peninsula in the Egegik district and was headed to deliver about 800 pounds of salmon when his 30-horsepower outboard motor became inoperable.

Assuming he could row the skiff across the bay to his tender the *Naknek Spirit*, he began the laborious work, but soon discovered he was quickly losing ground against the strong ebb tide.

"I started drifting and I lost sight of land for a day and a half," Norbut says. Fighting a fierce 35-40 knot storm with waves up to 14 feet, "There were definitely times when I made peace with God," he said.

"This is much more of an adventure than I'd really bargained for. I do rivers and white water well, but I'm not really good in the ocean."

Norbut, clad in a survival suit but traveling with no radio, was blown more than 80 miles away to Nushagak Bay near Igushik, where he washed up on an isolated beach near a state Fish and Game fishing district boundary line and was stranded for two full days.

After unsuccessfully trying to flag down two passing gillnetters, Norbut flagged down a small plane some 48 hours later, piloted by Anchorage physician Matison White, who landed his Super Cub on the beach and flew Norbut to Dillingham.

"When you see a fellow on a beach in a survival suit waving at an airplane, you figure something's up," White said. He also gave Norbut some practical advice as they parted: "Buy a stronger anchor rope and do a little maintenance on your engine from time to time."

"This is much more of an adventure than I'd really bargained for, Norbut admits. I do rivers and white water well, but I'm not really good in the ocean," he says.

While stranded on the beach, "I could see the lights of Ekuk, but there was no way to contact them."

Next time Norbut, who used to live near Mt. Hood, Oregon, plans to take along a VHF radio or cellular phone with him when he's out next summer, once again braving the treacherous waters of Bristol Bay.

He'll have to buy a new outboard motor, too, as well as a fuel tank and various tools, as they were stolen from his abandoned skiff as it sat on the edge of Nushagak Bay.

#### ALASKA STELLER SEA LION NUMBERS DECLINING

ANCHORAGE — While the number of both seals and sea lions on the Lower Columbia River has increased dramatically the past few years, Alaska Steller sea lions are experiencing another sharp decline, according to a recent study released by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

"They are kind of in a gray area between threatened and endangered," says Richard Merrick, an oceanographer with the NMFS. The survey, completed this past June, showed a 20 percent decline in pups in the two years since the previous Aleutian Island study.

From Prince William Sound to the tip of the Aleutian chain, Steller sea lion's numbers have dropped to fewer than 37,000, down from the 125,000 in the 1970s.

Although the fleet has taken only three sea lions in 1993 at this writing, commercial fishermen fear that inclusion on the endangered list could trigger

even more stringent catch restrictions for North Pacific fishermen and their families, who target pollock, cod and other species.

Merrick says that human use of the ecosystem has taken its toll on the sea lions, possibly by reducing the amount of fish on which pups feed. Natural fluctuations do not account for the decline, he says.

The federal government declared the Steller sea lion threatened in 1990.

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# Salmon shortage leaves restaurants reeling

Ginna Shannon, manager of Shaw's Crab House in Chicago, normally serves more than a "ton and a half" of fresh Columbia River chinook salmon every spring. This year, after some three weeks of promotion, only 700 pounds came through the door.

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And so it went. Los Angeles's Water Grill, Shaw's Crab House in Chicago, the Four Seasons in New York — all awaiting and promoting the seafood event of the season: the arrival of famous Columbia River chinook salmon, arguably the finest salmon in the world.

The problem was the salmon never made it to the party, and the no-show left some of the nation's top seafood restaurants — and their customers — reeling.

While the Crab House was fortunate to purchase some 700 pounds, some restaurants never saw a fish.

"To say that we are upset and disappointed is an understatement," said Matt Stein, executive chef at the Water Grill, where more than five weeks of preparation and promotion went down the drink when the prized salmon became unavailable at the anticipated time.

The salmon snafu was the result of a shortened commercial season for Columbia River gillnetters this spring when the National Marine Fisheries Service failed to submit a "biological opinion" which stated that the lower river fishery would not harm threatened Snake River fish which enter the river much later in the season. The delay cost salmon fishermen and salmon lovers dearly — only 1,600 were landed by fishermen this spring.



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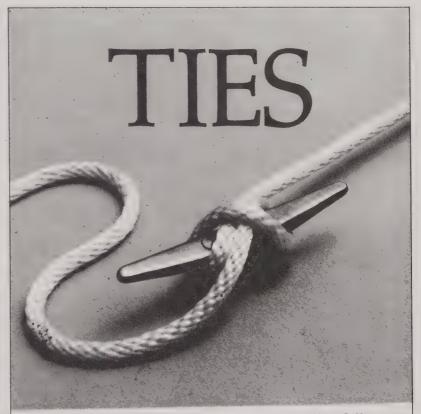


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# LAST RESORT: Gillnetters use net "decoy" to deter seals

ASTORIA — Commercial fishermen working at the mouth of the Columbia River are so frustrated by fish-stealing seals and sea lions they've resorted to using a decoy.

The decoy often is Eldon Korpela.

The battle between man and the sea mammals has reached the point where Korpela, a retired Astoria fisheries biologist, teacher and fisherman, is regularly asked to come out of retirement for his decoy chores.

"Fishermen ask me to take my boat out and put a net in the water" to lure seals and sea lions away from the gillnet fishermen who are really fishing and depend on the river for their income, says Korpela.

Gillnets trap fish in the net's mesh. Seals and sea lions find an easy meal by stealing the helpless fish before a fisherman can bring in his catch.

This competition between mammals and fishermen is similar to the battle waged for years by state and federal fisheries biologists who are trying to keep sea lions from eating wild steelhead trout that migrate through the fish ladder at the Ballard Locks in Seattle.

Columbia River gillnetters, however, say they can only relate to the problem at the locks if they multiply the locks situation many times over.

Instead of having to deal with six or eight sea lions eating a dwindling number of wild steelhead at the locks each winter, gillnetters say they compete with more than 3,400 seals and sea lions for a steadily decreasing number of salmon in the Columbia.

Aerial surveys show there are now up to 400 California sea lions in the river from January through mid-May, plus a smaller number of the huge and threat-

ened Steller sea lions, and up to 3,000 Harbor seals.

More than 100 seals and sea lions often haul out each day on a rock breakwater within barking distance of the east Astoria boat basin where most gillnetters moor their boats.

Some compare the Columbia's seals and sea lions with rats in the basement of

#### "Seals and sea lions are better fishermen than us and have better lawyers..."

a house. "What would you do?" asked one fisherman. "You'd shoot the rats."

Fishermen can and sometimes do legally shoot at seals and sea lions, but such measures are restricted by the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Shooting them must be proved justifiable and must be carefully documented or shooters will have to deal with the service's law enforcement division.

Conservation groups are attacking the act's exemption that allows fishermen with nets in the water to protect them and their fish by shooting seals and sea lions.

"It's getting pretty common to come back without any fish," says one gillnetter. Most fishermen here also fish in Alaska because you can't exist on just the Columbia River fishery anymore."

Ab Ihander of Astoria, a gillnetter for more than 50 years, says the increase in the number of seals and sea lions on the Columbia began about 15 years ago.

"You used to make a pretty good living here," Ihander says. "I put three kids through college on what I took out of the river, but it is completely out of control now. Everyone is pointing fingers at everyone else — the dams, habitat destruction, high-seas fishery management problems — but the seals and sea lions are the coup de grace."

Henry Boyd, another retired Astoria gillnetter, said people laughed at him last year because he was "fishing in a seal estuary. But that was the hottest seining spot because the fish are funneled through certain channels.

"I had to fish there if I wanted to have any chance of getting fish, and the naimals knew that just as well as I did.

"The seals and sea lions have evolved into one of the most talented predators on earth. They are better fishermen than us and have better lawyers."

Some fishermen wonder if the seals and sea lions are being pushed into the river because they can't find fish in the open ocean.

Some gillnetters remember when a man hired by the state with a .22-caliber rifle went about in a small grey boat, patrolling for marauding seals and sea lions.

"He was paid \$5 a nose from money we paid for our permits," Ihander recalls. "He didn't keep the population down that much, but it was under control."

Boyd believes the animals have a right to survive, "but the estuaries where we fish have to be protected. Something needs to be done to keep them out in the ocean."

Keith Matteson is sympathetic to gillnetter problems. Surprisingly to some, Matteson endorses many of their arguments even though he is director of the Marine Mammal Observer Program of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Continued on next page









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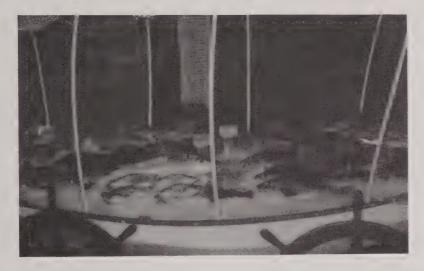
#### **PAULINE S. MARINCOVICH** 1920-1993

A lifelong resident of the Astoria area, Pauline S. Marincovich passed away in Astoria October 12, 1993.

Born in Camas, Wash. February 29, 1920 to Frank and Julie Miller Stauffer, Mrs. Marincovich attended Camas, Astoria and Jewell schools. She came to Astoria in 1929, and married commercial fisherman Jack S. Marincovich on January 27, 1940. He died February 25, 1993.

Pauline was a devoted homemaker who enjoyed gardening and ceramics. Surviving are a son and daughter-in-law, Jim and Christine Marincovich of Phoenix, Ariz; a sister, Vivian Kelim of Svensen; two brothers, Delmer Stauffer of Roseburg and Frank Stauffer of Portland; grandchildren Angie and Geoff Marincovich of Phoenix, and several nieces and nephews.

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#### Seals

A three-year study, the observer program ends in December and Matteson will write a report for congressional use in discussing future renewal of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The study is funded by the NMFS and coordinated by the Oregon and Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife.

"This year," Matteson says, "the fishing effort has really dropped off and, as a result of the MMPA, you have more and more animals out there and fishing has been terrible. I don't know that the seals are the last nail in the coffin for commercial fishing, but their populations are growing at maybe 10 percent a year."

"The fishermen do have something to complain about," he says.

During the 1992 winter fishery, Matte-

son's people witnessed 143 sea lion contacts with gillnets or their fish near the river mouth. That was contact with nearly 10 percent of the net drifts set there.

The observers also found that in 26 percent of the nets set in the same area, mammals were within 10 meters of the fishermen's nets.

It is only within that 10 meters, or almost 33 feet, that fishermen can defend their nets and catch. Gunfire is allowed only if the fisherman has previously filed with the federal government for permission. They can also use underwater firecrackers called seal bombs.

Matteson believes the most effective measure fishermen can use is "running the net," where he cuts the net loose and runs his boat along it and hopes he can chase the mammal away.

More effective would be modifying the Marine Mammal Protection Act to allow "lethal removal" of problem mammals, some observers and fisheries officials believe.

—From the Seattle Times



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#### GOOD NEWS: Americans eating more salmon, fish exports set record

Tuna still tops the list of favorite seafood, but Americans are eating more salmon

Although Americans ate less seafood last year than they did the year before, they ate significantly more salmon and pollock.

A survey released this summer by the National Fisheries Institute says that tuna is still the favorite among American seafood lovers: consumers ate an average of 3.5 pounds of it per capita in 1992. Shrimp came in a close second at 2.5 pounds per capita.

But the good news for West Coast commercial fishermen is that salmon consumption is up too — up from .97 of a pound (per capita) in 1991 to 1.16 pounds per person in 1992. The amount is especially significant when you consider that in 1987, just six years ago, Americans ate only .43 of a pound per person.

"Continued high production in major salmon runs in Alaska has made salmon more readily available to seafood consumers whether they are dining out or shopping at their local retail outlet," says Lee Weddig, executive vice president of the NFI.

"The wild salmon sources are supplemented by year-round availability of farm-raised salmon from various parts of the world."

But it's these same worldwide fish farms which have also driven down prices paid to commercial fishermen.

Pollock came in at number three on the seafood list this year, an impressive showing for a species that didn't even make the list a few years ago. Americans ate some 1.2 pounds of the whitefish per capita in 1992.

"We can attribute Alaska pollock's increased popularity to its many uses in

DEL'S TS

TIRE FACTORY

**Klyde Thompson** 

**Greg Johanson** 

breaded seafood products, such as fish sticks and fish sandwiches, and its inclusion in surimi seafoods," says Weddig. The product is also gaining popularity in its frozen form, he says.

While salmon consumption worldwide has been on the rise since the mid-to-late 1980s, the year-round availability and competitive price has spurred the consumption of both wild and farmed salmon. Analysts see the trend continuing through the 1990s, with some predicting per-capita consumption will hit the two-pound mark by the turn of the century.

Americans aren't eating nearly as much cod as in the past, however. Traditionally near the top of the favorite seafood list year after year, cod has fallen to the number five position for 1992, with consumption at 1.08 pounds per capita, down from a high of 1.71 pounds in 1988. Seafood analysts blame higher prices for cod last year.

While the total amount of seafood consumed in the USA last year exceeded 3.7 billion pounds, U.S. exports of edible seafood products reached a record 928,649 tons worth some \$3.4 billion in 1992.

The USA also imported more than 1.3 million metric tons of edible seafood fishery products valued at \$5.7 billion, \$34 million more than in 1991, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Fresh and frozen seafood exports consisted mostly of some 136,215 tons of salmon worth \$681.7 million, 107,732 tons of surimi valued at more than \$367 million and 78,040 tons of crab worth \$441.2 million.

Canned American seafood products exported included some 78,000 tons valued at \$303 million, with salmon as the main canned export commodity. More than 35,000 tons of canned salmon valued at \$154.4 million were exported.

## Wishing fishermen a prosperous 1994!



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# Study says dams must go

SEATTLE — A U.S. Department of Interior study says that two dams must be removed to restore salmon runs on the Elwha River.

A branch from the Strait of Juan de Fuca about five miles east of Port Angeles, the Elwha study is currently under review by state and federal agencies.

Last year's Congress authorized the Interior Department to remove the Glines Canyon and Elwha dams if it became necessary for the protection and restoration of salmon runs.

The study says that removal of the dams, which were built without fish ladders and reduced salmon runs by about 75-80 percent, would reopen some 70 miles of salmon habitat previously unreachable.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt has called the removal project "an enormous opportunity to restore fish runs" which were decimated by the dams some 60 years ago.

But the study estimates the removal of the dams will cost between \$66 and \$80 million and could take several years. And additional costs, including the protection of the Port Angeles water supply and maintaining power to the Daishowa America pulp mill, could push the total cost to \$160 million.

Fisheries biologists have estimated the Elwha is capable of producing more than 250,000 harvestable salmon, and that restoring the runs would bring back some 22 bird and animal species which feed on salmon.

"The salmon native to the Elwha were exceptionally big," says Bruce Brown, the author of "Mountain in the Clouds," which examines the destruction of the river's wild salmon runs. "Records of salmon larger than 100 pounds date from the time Spaniards explored in the 18th century."

In fact, the Interior Department study says that removal of the dams "could result in the recovery of chinook salmon of

extremely large size.

"Although restoration of spring chinook would take time, removal of the dams would ultimately result in the full restoration of all stocks of chinook salmon," the report says.

Meanwhile, the Northwest Power Planning Council is preparing an assessment on how the dam removal project could affect electrical supply.

#### IDAHO SAYS COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN HYDROELECTRIC DAMS HURT SALMON RUNS

BOISE, Idaho — Columbia River Basin dams have had deadly effects on endangered salmon, and Idaho is suing the federal government because of it.

A suit was filed in U.S. District Court in the state capital this September by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Bureau of Reclamation, Gov. Cecil Andrus said.

"We are asking that the federal court bring an end to the politically contrived determination that the dams and slackwater reservoirs provide no jeopardy to the fish," he said. "The interests that control the dams and the water have shown absolutely no compassion or concern or willingness to move in an expedited fashion to save these precious stocks."

In an opinion released earlier this year, the fisheries service announced the eight dams posed "no jeopardy" to the endangered Snake River sockeye run and the threatened Indaho chinook.

Andrus says the report detailed the havoc the dams make of the fish, but fed-

eral officials simply ignored it.

So now, Idaho seeks an order declaring the opinion invalid, requiring the defendants to operate the system in a manner safe for fish, and develop a long-term plan for reviving runs.

In the 1950s, the number of spring and summer Snake River chinook averaged some 125,000 per year, but by the 1980s, had dropped to less than 10,000.

From 1969 to 1974, fall chinook on the lower Snake averaged 12,700, but has fallen to 450 fish since 1989. Snake River sockeye dropped from 4,361 in 1955 to just one in 1992. Only eight have returned to their spawning grounds at Redfish Lake this year.

Andrus has supported and pushed for the "Idaho Plan" in which the lower Snake River reservoirs would be drawn down in the spring to create a current the salmon smolts could "ride" past the dams' deadly turbines. While one test drawdown was done last year, officials do not plan any future attempts even though the effectiveness of the procedure appeared promising.

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# Waves from the past

Here four classic Columbia River Gillnetters, loaded with their nets, rest contentedly at a dock receiving station on the lower river sometime in the 1960s. Note the two young boys playing on the net, as well as the wooden corks.

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## Proposed Seaside condominium spurs habitat concerns

Developers say they've gone to "great lengths" to ensure the project is environmentally-friendly

SEASIDE — One of the North Coast's most productive remaining parcels of wildlife habitat will be permanently damaged if a proposed condominium project is built here, says the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

"We wouldn't be here if the site wasn't important," said Jim Cadwell, state biologist with the department's Tillamook office at a recent Seaside town meeting. The ODFW has asked the City of Seaside to modify the western portion of the project, the most environmentally-sensitive area, so that it is protected from development.

The project's architect, Steve Wasserberger, says the 71-unit Sahhalie development's effect on the sensitive estuary has been carefully studied by the owners, a group of Oregon investors called Cascade Trust, who have gone to great lengths to ensure the condo will be environmentally-friendly.

But Seaside High School sophomore Erica Johnson, who testified at the town meeting with several of her classmates, said the pristine estuary is irreplaceable, and that the condo development would surely place the area at risk.

"Once the estuary is gone, it's gone," she said. The students testified that the harsh effects on the environment were more important than building more houses for the wealthy. SHS has based some recent science projects on studying the area's unique estuary environments.

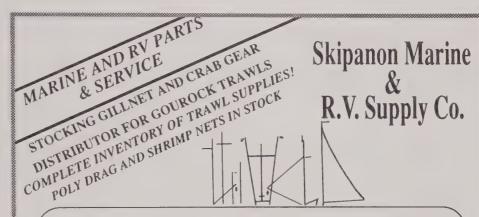
The city's planning commission chairperson, Linda Evenrude, the only person testifying for the development not employed by Cascade Trust, stated "It is the owner's and developer's right to do what they want with the property when they want to do it."

Cadwell and the state wildlife department don't agree, saying that the state's wildlife belonged to the people of Oregon, not to the whims of individual property owners.

Opponents of the condo project, joining with the ODFW, include such partners as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Oregon Natural Resources

Council and the neighboring city of Gearhart, which shares Neacoxie Creek and the Necanicum River estuary with the city of Seaside.

City councilors have reportedly received dozens of phone calls, letters and petitions concerning the condo project. While the project has already been approved by the city planning commission, approval from the city council has not been confirmed at this writing.



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## Floridians could vote to ban gillnets in '94

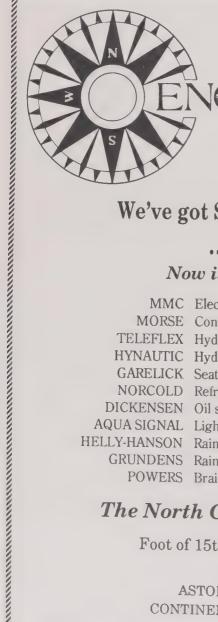
ORLANDO — Florida voters could vote on an amendment next year that would eliminate all "entangling devices" and ban virtually all nets larger than 500 square feet in coastal Florida waters if sponsors collect enough signatures to place the amendment on the 1994 ballot.

Touted by a statewide coalition of conservation groups called "S.O.S," (Save our Sealife), the sponsors are claiming that gillnets are to blame for the mass destruction of marine mammals and environments in Florida, even though commercial fishermen know the contact they have with marine wildlife is minimal at best.

Last Election Day, in just twelve hours, more than 200,000 Florida voters signed the petition to get the anti-gillnet measure on the ballot, most surely being told it was the answer to all of Florida's environmental woes. Some 422,000 total signatures are needed by August, 1994.

The Sealife Coalition says that, in the end, the ban would benefit all fishermen by reducing stock depletion. Still, the coalition is recommending to the state legislature that commercial fishermen be compensated for their lost fishing time and eventual elimination from revenue collected from sportfishing license fees.

No word on how sportfishermen feel about subsidizing impacted commercial fishermen or what underhanded and misleading tactics will be used to get the amendment on the ballot, but it appears likely that Florida voters will have the opportunity to decide the controversial issue for themselves when they go to the ballot box next November.



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## New life for an old fisherman

A classic 66-year-old Columbia River Gillnetter has a new look on life.

The "Shoo-Fly," built in 1928, originally owned by *Columbia River Gillnetter* editor Don Riswick, has recently undergone a \$10,000 facelift that has returned the historic old wooden boat to its former glory.

"It was quite a job," says the 76-year-old Riswick of the restoration project. "It took me back to the old days when there were dozens of wooden bowpickers on the river."

Although the original designer and builder of the "Shoo-Fly" is unknown, Warrenton boatbuilder David Green has performed the most recent transformation, and Green says the boat was showing its age when it arrived at his shop.

"Your frames start going when your planks start popping out a little bit. Well, that lets the corking out and they start leaking," Green says. "Then they drive more corking in, that spreads them a little more. As soon as the corking falls out, they drive a little more and pretty soon you've got a half-inch-wide seam with no back, and what are you gonna do? It gets to the point where you don't know where to stop."

Although Riswick sold the "Shoo-Fly" in the 1980s to Astoria fisherman Art Reith and is just the "official boat-puller" now, he still enjoys plying the old bowpicker through the waters by the stretch of beach for which it's named, just below a steep hill in east Astoria where the Riswicks have lived for years.



READY TO GO — Here is boatbuilder David Green standing in the newly-restored "Shoo-Fly" in front of his Warrenton shop.

Green says most of the "Shoo-Fly's" original Port Orford cedar planking has been replaced by yellow cedar or Douglas fir.

The mahogany tophouse, which sits atop a new trunk cabin made of gleaming stainless steel, was crafted by 84-year-old Washingtonian gillnetter and woodworker Wilmer Johnson, who still lays his net out from time to time.

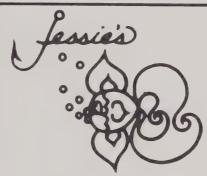
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#### SNAKE RIVER SOCKEYE SOON TO SPAWN

SAWTOOTH VALLEY, Idaho — Some endangered Snake River sockeye salmon in the Bonneville Power Administration's Sawtooth Valley captive broodstock project should be reproducing late this fall.

The fish were trapped as they left Redfish Lake in 1991, when they were one to two years old. Some are wild sockeye, while others may be offspring of the resident stocks of Redfish Lake.

Of the original 800 fish trapped, about 400 will survive, most of which will be spawned artificially. Their young will be placed in net pens in Redfish Lake or other Stanley Basin lakes next spring and allowed to migrate in 1995.

This will be the first opportunity to discover whether broodstock sockeye reproduce successfully. Researchers hope to perfect a genetic test to distinguish migratory sockeye from the physically similar kokanee, a non-migrating species.

If all goes well, the first fish born and raised in the program could return from the ocean in the fall of 1997 as 4-year-old adults. The run migrates some 900 miles from the ocean to Sawtooth Valley.

Two other younger groups of sockeye will mature in 1995, the offspring of the four adults captured at Redfish Lake in 1991.

Recently the National Marine Fisheries Service moved one group of 771 fish from Seattle to larger tanks at the Big Beef Creek facility near Seabeck, Wash. An outbreak of bacterial kidney disease, now under control, reduced their survival rate to 79 percent. The second group of about 900, being reared by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, has a survival rate above 90 percent.

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#### Water released for late Clearwater chinook migration

A late migration of Idaho's Clearwater chinook salmon this summer meant more water had to be released to augment Columbia River flows through early August.

The Dworshak and Brownlee dam reservoirs and the Bureau of Reclamation's Upper Snake projects all increased flows this year to help aid salmon on their trek to the Pacific Ocean.

At this writing, the total volume of water used to enhance salmon survival was approximately 12.7 billion cubic meters, or 10.3 million acre-feet. That's about twice the size of the volume of water in place behind the Grand Coulee Dam.

The BPA says dam operators met the National Marine Fisheries Service minimum flow requirements using "various operational measures."

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# TALES FROM THE OLD SCHOOL

A grand old man ended his journey February 18, 1993.

Al Neimeyer started his journey in Ohio 87 years ago, which took him to North Dakota as a young man, where he started a delivery service. He ran his service first on a bicycle, then a motorcycle and finally a motorcar.

Mr. Neimeyer left North Dakota for the coast, first at Van Port where he took a job in the shipyards at Vancouver, Washington, where he was soon the lead man.

Working nights, he saw lights on the Columbia River and, asking what they were, was told they were gillnetters and was invited to go fishing with a fellow worker. He went and later bought out the fisherman.

So began a 52-year love affair with the river and the fish in it. Mr. Neimeyer was influenced and helped by many fishermen, and in return, influenced and helped many more.

When he began fishing, there were of course many more seasons and many more fish than today. He started pulling

nets full of fish into his boat by hand. He and his wife Margret sold fish from their home on Lower River Road and to the many canneries in Vancouver and Portland. Those canneries are long gone.

"Take care of the river, and she will take care of you."

Being the hard working and progressive man that he was, he was the first to point out the fact that industrial waste from canneries, mills and sewage was harming the river and the fish in it.

Showing the slidge in his nets with persistent concern to the mills and canneries involved was the beginning of cleaning up the Columbia River.

Al said, "You take care of the river, and she will take care of you."

Al soon owned four fishing boats which other fishermen fished for him. They were the first to use nylon nets on the river. Al loved to tell us about his early life, but always left something unsaid to leave us with, something to think

and wonder about.

Just before the fall fishing season in 1990, he became ill. That year we were grading, weighing and shipping fish the gillnetters caught. This was the first time in 52 years that Al wasn't there for the opening. He was sure the fish couldn't make it up the river without him, but of course they did.

As soon as that last fish was taken care of, I had to go to the hospital, have coffee and give him a full report.

I have never seen a person fight so hard to come back. Al's journey ended February 18, 1993, when he died at his home with his wife by his side.

So ended a legend on the Columbia River, and a much-respected and loved man. Both we and the river have lost a good friend.

God's speed, Al, we love you and will miss you, but we will always have our memories.

-Sam Sidebottom, Vancouver, WA



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# GETTING THE MESSAGE

#### Hi-tech sonar guides salmon to the sea in California's San Joaquin Valley

FRESNO, California — San Joaquin Valley water customers will use underwater speakers and high-tech sonar equipment in a first-ever attempt to have a word with salmon smolts swimming down the Sacramento River.

The message: Turn right and head west to the Pacific Ocean, away from the huge, dangerous water pumping plants at Tracy.

The water customers, led by the San Luis-Delta Mendota Water Authority, have hired an East Coast defense contractor to conduct the experiment which will create an acoustic barrier, or a wall of sound.

"Our marine biologists have listened to fish to find out what sound vibrations they hear and devised a sound barrier to divert them from turning a certain direction," says John Lang, production manager at Energy Engineering Service Co. of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

"We've done quite a bit of research. This will give us an opportunity to see if the fish will listen."

The San Luis authority, representing some 39 Valley agricultural, urban and wetlands customers, sees the \$440,000 experiment as a way of hitching its wagon to the environmental movement.

The final permits have not been issued at this writing, but authority officials are optimistic the experiment will take place.

"We've been fighting the Endangered Species Act and the Miller-Bradley act (mandating fresh water releases to protect fish and wildlife in the delta)," says Dan Nelson, manager of the authority.

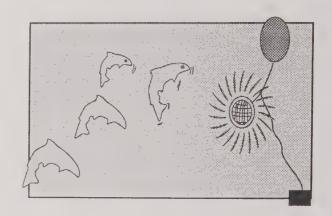
"We now realize that until the fisheries and the environment receive adequate protection, our pumping and our water supply will be restricted."

The Miller-Bradley legislation, known as the Central Valley Project Improvement Act that was passed in California last fall, provides some 800,000 acrefect of delta water to protect fisheries and the environment.

As a result, many agricultural members of the authority are receiving only 50 percent of their contractual supplies this year because water pumping has undermined the Sacramento-San Joaquin River delta ecosystem.

Even if the state has another rainfall year that registers 150 percent of normal, as this year did, the story will remain the same for most agricultural customers.

Compared to the water export restrictions, the acoustic barrier may represent an environmentally benign, inexpensive way to protect fisheries, Valley wa-



ter officials say. But the experimental technology isn't well known. Experts in such organizations as the Aquatic Habitat Institute in Richmond, Virginia, shrugged when asked about the effectiveness of acoustic barriers.

John Beuttler, executive director of the United Anglers of California, said, "I don't know anything about sonic barriers. It would be a godsend for salmon if it works.

No one in government is opposing the concept. The field test will be under the auspices of the Interagency Ecological Studies Program, which includes officials from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services and the state Fish and Game Department.

"Some work has been done with this kind of technology," said Robert Potter, chief deputy director of the state Department of Water Resources. "But it has never been tested with salmon — not in California, anyway. It's an excellent idea."

The project will start when 10 million fall-run salmon smolts are released from the Coleman National Hatchery near Redding. Five to seven underwater speakers will be anchored on the river bottom and held afloat by buoys about 1,000 feet from the Georgiana Slough, a waterway to the delta interior.

Federal biologists have estimated 30 percent of the salmon run historically turn down this slough. Scientists believe the salmon emigrating to the interior of the complex delta network stand a much lower chance of reaching the Pacific than those continuing in the Sacramento River.

-The Fresno Bee

# "A Call for Cooperation" from the Northwest Power Planning Council

Fishing for salmon always has been a central part of Northwest life. Salmon are caught and sold, and the resulting income supports thousands of people regionwide — particularly in fishing towns near the mouth of the Columbia River.

Indians have treaty rights to catch salmon for cultural and religious celebrations, for sale and to feed their families.

Beginning about the mid-1800s, commercial salmon harvesters steadily increased their catch. Fish wheels, nets and traps took large numbers of salmon out of the Columbia to feed the booming canning industry. Harvesters took so many salmon that by the 1870s there was concern for the future of the runs, and the first salmon hatcheries were built.

Since the 1960s, state, federal and international fishery managers have been steadily cutting harvest rates to protect salmon runs. For example, there has been no commercial fishing for Columbia River summer chinook salmon since 1964. The last fishing season for any Snake River chinook salmon was in 1975, although limited fishing continues for salmon returning to a hatchery on the Rapid River, a Salmon River tributary. And the United States and Canada signed a treaty in 1985 that set limits on harvests of salmon originating in both nations.

Because our Council lacks the authority to regulate harvest seasons, we ask fishery managers to continue their moratorium on commercial fishing for summer chinook, and to halt commercial harvest of sockeye below the confluence of the Snake and Columbia Rivers to protect endangered Snake River sockeye. The Governors of Washington and Oregon have directed their state fishery agencies to follow our harvest re-

At our suggestion, commercial fishers, Bonneville, and the states of Oregon and Washington are developing a voluntary program to reduce the number of commercial fishing licenses in the region. Again, the goal is to cut harvests and enable more adult fish to reproduce.

The salmon plan also calls for a review of sport fishing regulations and adoption of more rigorous catch-and-release rules to protect depleted runs. We seek an accounting of incidental harvest of salmon in other fisheries, and increased law enforcement and public education to deter illegal fishing.

To further protect Columbia Basin salmon, we endorse the United Nations resolution to phase out the high seas drift-net

Continued on next page



#### COOPERATION -

fishery by the end of this year.

Finally, fishery regulators need a better understanding of how many salmon are being caught and where they are being caught. This would help them set harvest seasons. So we ask the National Marine Fisheries Service to report each year on all ocean and river harvests, and the number of fish that escape capture and head upriver to reproduce.

#### FIX DAMS AND WATER DIVERSIONS

One of the most effective actions to improve the survival of young salmon is to guide them away from turbines and water diversions. The reason is simple: fish can die or be stunned if they are drawn through the turbines at dams, and they can become lost and die if they swim down water diversion channels. Screens and bypass channels are the answer to this problem.

In our first fish and wildlife program, we called for screens and bypass channels at all Columbia and Snake river dams that didn't have them already. Initially, there was resistance from the federal Office of Management and Budget. Screens for the big dams are big themselves, and expensive. Many are needed.

The Dalles Dam, for example, will need more than 60 screens to cover all of its turbine intakes, and each screen is bigger than a billboard sign. But the region and Congress support screening the dams, and the work should be completed by March 1998.

Next, we focus on installing screens at water diversions. Because there are so many unscreened diversions — literally thousands — we ask fishery managers to prioritize screening projects in areas that support depleted salmon runs. This will help ensure timely construction and installation where the need is greatest.

#### **IMPROVE SMOLT BARGING**

Some salmon get a ride past the dams. They are collected at McNary, Little Goose and Lower Granite Dams, then transported in special barges past the downriver dams. They are released below Bonneville Dam to continue their journey to the ocean.

The current barge transportation system began in 1981. At the time, it was considered an interim measure to move smolts past the dams until diversion screens were in place.

Over the years, the Corps of Engineers regional fishery managers have analyzed the benefits of transportation. The conclusion: benefits vary widely among salmon species. Steelhead and fall chinook appear to benefit the most. Benefits for spring and summer chinook and sockeye are less clear.

Generally, scientists maintain that transporting salmon around the dams can increase survival under some conditions.

We recognize that despite extensive research on barging of salmon, much disagreement remains about its benefits. Nonetheless, in the immediate years ahead, barging is one of the few tools the region has to improve salmon survival, particularly in low-water conditions. Barge transportation of salmon should be improved immediately to boost salmon survival in the near term.

In our salmon strategy, we call on the Corps of Engineers to expedite imporvements in transportation. Cooler water and less crowded conditions in the barges, for example, may help reduce stress and improve survival. When the fish are released from barges below Bonneville Dam, survival may increase if the fish are

dispersed more widely along the river. This could help them avoid predators and adapt to river conditions.

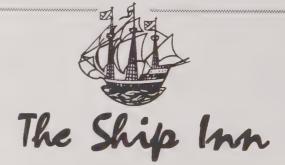
#### **CONTROL PREDATORS**

Conditions in the modern Columbia and Snake rivers, because of the dams, are ideal for salmon predators, particularly squawfish. They thrive in the warm, slow-moving water of the reservoirs.

Other factors also favor salmon predators. For example, hatchery smolts sometimes are weakened by disease or don't know how to avoid predators. Smolts are easy prey below dams because they are stunned after passing through the turbines.

One solution to this problem is to reduce the number of predators. Our strategy calls for reducing the squawfish population by 20 percent within five years. Experts believe this, in turn, could lead to a 25-percent reduction in predation.

We are also concerned about the survival of adult salmon. Many are killed by seals and sea lions in the lower Columbia River. But seals and sea lions are protected by federal law, so we can only



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urge the National Marine Fisheries Service to continue evaluating the impact these creatures have on salmon.

#### **IMPROVE SALMON HABITAT**

Salmon habitat includes the streams where spawners lay their eggs, where eggs hatch and where young fish spend the first year or two of their lives. It includes the rivers, the tributaries, the Columbia estuary and the Pacific Ocean.

Salmon need cool, clean water in the shallow streams where they reproduce. Where shorelines have been stripped of shrubs and trees that shade the water, the stream heats up. Erosion is more likely, and erosion can silt up the gravel in the stream, making it less suitable for the salmon to build nests and lay eggs.

Planting the shoreline with quickgrowing grasses and shrubs, and keeping livestock away from the plants restores the stream to a healthier environment for the salmon.

The quality of the habitat determines how many fish survive. Ideally, spawning gravel is abundant and clean. Rocks and woody debris in the water create pools for resting and feeding.

As human populations increased, so did impacts on salmon habitat. For example, the construction of Grand Coulee and Hells Canyon dams, which have no fish ladders, eliminated one-third of the available salmon habitat in the basin. Other activities degraded the quality of remaining habitat.

Our highest priority for salmon habitat is to maintain its quantity and productivity. We are especially concerned about preserving or restoring streams where salmon and steelhead can spawn naturally.

One objective of our strategy is to ensure that activities to improve salmon production are coordinated for each watershed. We don't see this as a planning process. We see it as a way of doing business. It accounts for all interests, including the salmon's.

Because about 40 percent of the remaining salmon and steelhead habitat in the Columbia Basin is bordered by private land, it is essential that public and private landowners cooperate in comprehensive efforts to manage salmon habitat.

We also call on federal and state land and water managers to improve salmon habitat by revising timber, mining and livestock management practices. Land and water managers need to focus their attention on protecting streamside areas. "The ancient Columbia
Basin had no fish
batcheries. Salmon
reproduced in the shallow,
graveled areas of rivers
and streams."

The ancient Columbia River Basin had no fish hatcheries. Salmon reproduced in the shallow, graveled areas of rivers and streams. As overfishing, dams and other developments took their toll, fish hatcheries were built to compensate for the loss of salmon. Nearly everyone agreed with the approach.

The remarkable homing instinct of salmon worked well with hatchery production. Salmon return to the waters of their birth — in this case, to the hatcheries where they were released as juveniles.

But there have been problems. Some fish hatcheries failed because there was a critical lack of knowledge about fish biollogy, disease and genetics.

Ironically, as understanding increased and hatcheries became more successful, problems occurred elsewhere. Hatchery fish mix in the ocean with salmon spawned in rivers, and both are caught by fishers. In this mixed-stock fishery, fish that spawn naturally are overharvested.

In the rivers, too, hatchery fish are a problem because they can overwhelm salmon from those rivers. There needs to be a better understanding of how many juvenile fish the Columbia Basin can support. This "carrying capacity" has an impact on the survival of all salmon in the river.

It is a vexing puzzle: the number of fish spawning in rivers is declining, and hatchery fish could help; yet interbreeding could further imperil the naturally-spawning species.

What to do?

State and federal fishery managers must develop consistent hatchery practices that enable hatchery fish to survive in the natural environment without harming the fish that spawn there naturally.

When hatchery fish are released into streams to rebuild runs that are facing extinction — a practice called "supplementation" — caution must be taken to measure and minimize genetic and environmental impacts.

We call for experiments to test supplementation as a means of conserving and rebuilding naturally reproducing salmon populations.

#### A CALL FOR COOPERATION

For more than 50 years, Northwesterners have enjoyed the benefits of the Columbia River system — electricity, irrigated farms, river navigation, flood control, recreational opportunities and more — at a cost that doesn't account for the loss of salmon and other creatures that relied on the river for their survival.

But regional attitudes and laws have changed. The Northwest Power Act, for example, orders that fish and wildlife of the Columbia River Basin be protected and enhanced because they were damaged by the dams.

The cost of rebuilding these fish and wildlife populations is part of the cost of electricity from these dams.

The Act further requires that we treat the entire Columbia River Basin as a single system when we design our program of recovery.

To save the salmon, we must consider their well-being whenever our actions intersect with theirs. We must change the way we operate our dams, irrigate our farms, ship our commodities and fish in our waters.

This salmon strategy was crafted with all of these elements in mind. It is designed to help guide the regional transition to a more conscientious future, one in which the salmon can thrive without hobbling our economy, and the economy can flourish without killing off the fish.

We have no doubt that the Northwest can make this transition, but it will not come cheaply, quickly or without complications.

Salmon are worth saving.

—From "Strategy for Salmon," a publication of the Northwest Power Planning Council



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Those were the days

The sight of a big chinook coming over the power roller is becoming rarer and rarer. As the Northwest Power Planning Council calls for "cooperation" from gillnetters, fishermen wonder what more they can do after fishing only 17 days in 1993.



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#### Fish Fights

on legal and political grounds, at times also erupted into aggression. Conflict developed between gillnetters, most of whom lived in Astoria, and trapmen fishing nets who lived next to Baker's Bay on the Washington side of the river.

Gillnetters had organized the Columbia River Fishermen's Union, which evolved from organizations of gillnetters dating back to 1876. Gillnetters were organized for the purpose of mutual aid, proposing and opposing fisheries legislation, bettering fish prices and maintaining drifts.

Trapmen were organized into the Washington Fishermen's Association, principally to counter the gillnetters.

Since the best fishing grounds were along the north shore of the Columbia from the mouth to Baker's Bay, the two groups competed with one another for access to the salmon resource. With the increase in the number of trapmen and gillnetters, traps were built farther out, into gillnetter's drifts, and gillnetters were forced to fish closer to the treacherous Columbia River bar.

Gillnetters said the trapmen's pound nets were hazards to navigation, destructive to the resource by catching undersized fish, and the monopoly of a few. Trapmen countered by claiming gillnetters of the fishermen's union were greedily coveting the salmon resource, trying to intimidate the trapmen by threats of violence, and wastefully throwing away fish which exceeded capacity of canneries.

Threats of violence were backed up with numerous violent incidents. Each time a drowned gillnetter was found in or near a pound net the aggravation over pound nets was heightened.

The gillnetter's scow, used to clear drifts, was also used on occasion to clear away pound nets thought to be illegally placed hazards to navigation.

In the early fall of 1887 a contingent of gillnetters attempting to organize gillnetters from Grays Harbor, skirmished with a group of trapmen. Nine gillnetters were arrested, and one later died from wounds received during the fight.

Please turn to page 35

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## ASMI makes plans as world salmon farmers join forces

While the newly-expanded Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute prepares to spend about \$7 million in revenue from the new one percent salmon tax paid by fishermen and processors to promote domestic sales of wild salmon, the world's salmon farmers are launching promotions of their own.

For the first time in its history, the ASMI board of directors now has equal numbers of commercial fishermen and processors at its table, as they plan a national marketing campaign targeted at domestic outlets.

While the board discussed the strategy at its fall meeting in Anchorage, salmon farmers in Chile, Canada and Norway were busily working toward capturing their own share of the U.S. salmon market, and many have already taken a variety of significant steps to improve their public image in the USA.

For instance, the British Columbia Salmon Farmers' Association, with a \$100,000 seed budget, is now offering "chemical-free" salmon, which does not contain feeds that induce rapid weight growth, according to Ross Murray, presi-

dent of the association. The introduction of new high-tech harvest methods have also kept pace with the international market's demand for top-quality products.

American fishermen are only now realizing the valuable importance of careful fish handling and delivery, and are now taking steps to improve ship-to-shore handling. But many fishermen are still reluctant to put down their picking hooks, and this could lead to their detriment.

Meanwhile, progressive salmon farm-

ers in other countries are treating their prized salmon with kid gloves at every stage of handling. During processing, the fish are transferred to carbon-dioxide-injected holding tanks which stun the salmon, so they don't struggle when they are cut and bled, Murray said.

It is innovative techniques such as this which American fishers and processors alike will have to watch if they expect to remain competitive in the world's fierce salmon marketplace.



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## The one that got away

QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS — Commercial fishermen aren't the only ones who have fierce battles with seals and sea lions over their prized salmon catches.

This summer, two sportfishermen fishing at the Langara Fishing Lodge near the northern tip of Graham Island in the Queen Charlotte Islands, had a battle with a determined sea lion over a salmon — and lost.

After hooking and fighting with a salmon near the Alaska/Canada border for more than an hour, Harold Nelson and Art Heckard soon realized they had more than a fish on the line, and a bit more than they bargained for.

Just then a pesky sea lion came out of the water, took a big bite, snapped the line and took the fish with it.

As the bottom picture shows, the two men had a camera to record the event of the "one that got away."

Well, the one that almost got away.



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## Letter from a Fisherman

There is great concern regarding the decline of the salmon resource here in the Pacific Northwest.

We point to overfishing, poor forestry practices, dams and foreign fishing. We have turned to the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Bill to protect species we feel are slipping away.

Is this the right approach?

Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash., says it will cost \$1 billion to rebuild the Columbia River runs. Patty Murray, D-Wash., is shocked.

Atlantic Canada is losing its cod fishery. After sustaining for over 150 years the fish are now gone. Thousands of jobs are being lost.

Are the Atlantic and Pacific related?

1972... In the Pacific Northwest, harbor seals and sea lions, numbering a few thousand, receive protection under the Marine Mammal Bill. Atlantic Canada Harp seals, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, are protected from commercial sealers.

For twenty years now these "Wolves of the Sea" have increased with no control.

Salmon numbers are declining, so we protect them under the Endangered Species Act. Ironically, they are declining in numbers because of seals and sea lions which are protected under the Marine Mammal Act!

The federal agency in charge, the National Marine Fisheries Service, says the seal population at the mouth of the Columbia River was 3,000 in 1972, when the Marine Mammal bill became law and

"The sport and commercial harvest of salmon in the Pacific Northwest is small numbers when compared to those killed by marine mammals."

all hunting was banned.

Now, the population is over **25,000** and increasing at six percent a year.

The same is true of all harbor seal populations from San Francisco to Canada. Every river mouth and bay has a population. They eat every day, 365 days a year.

The Columbia River herd, eating one fish per day, will kill about 9,125,000 salmon this year. If this herd is 25 percent of the total West Coast population, seals will kill 36,500,000 salmon this year alone. (They killed 4.4 million salmon in 1972.)

They also get help from their big cousin the sea lion, which can kill 20 times

more fish per day than a seal.

The sport and commercial harvest of salmon in the Pacific Northwest is small numbers when compared to those killed by marine mammals.

This year's sockeye catch was about two million. Coho, kings and chums will account for about one million. The sport and commercial catch combined for the Pacific Northwest is under five million fish.

Harp seals are destroying the cod fishery in Atlantic Canada, and harbor seals and sea lions are destroying the salmon resource in the Pacific Northwest.

The predation by seals must be controlled if we are to have a salmon resource.

All the rehabilitation projects we do are in vain without control of the predator.

-Carl Koskela

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#### Story of the Snake continued

and fish traps are light-years behind even the most primitive gillnet. They've already been tried years ago and talked about for the last ten years.

Enough already.

But these scientists, however goodintentioned, talked about nothing new. And they didn't talk about dams.

Improving barging. Testing water drawdowns. Improving spawning grounds. Reducing predators. And of course, phasing out commercial gillnetting on the Columbia.

By the time they try all these things, it will be too late. We need something done *now*. Not more tests or five-year studies.

One-hundred years from now, the Snake River system will be fishless, and we'll be faced with giant monolith concrete memorials to our once-great salmon runs.

The sad part is, 100 years from now new innovative energy sources will have long since replaced hydroelectric power, making dams all but obsolete.

Power companies want to phase-out just about every entity or practice that hurts salmon, but they wouldn't dream of suggesting a phase-out of their dams.

The Baker City-based "Fish in Northwest Streams" has the right idea — the group is all for a dam phase-out, because they live in the area and they've seen what's happened to their fish.

But we must remember Columbia River Gillnet fishermen are farmers of the sea, with a rich heritage of tradition and pride, putting food on the world's table and shoes on children's feet.

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Sportfishermen should join with us in the fight for dam phase-out, especially as they're seeing their seasons cut shorter and shorter, just like gillnetters.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see we're both in the same boat.

The Columbia River Fishermen's Union has been calling for fish ladders on all dams for nearly a century, but few seem to listen. Meanwhile, the fish disappear.

How can anyone expect salmon to thrive in a river where two-thirds of their spawning area is unavailable to them?

And how can you expect any significant number to make it through the deadly giant turbines?

You can expect it if politics gives way to the process of really saving fish.

We just want to know when.

-Don Riswick

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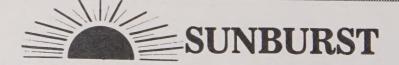
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#### Fish Fights

In 1896 the governors of Oregon and Washington called out their respective national guards to police the actions of gillnetters and trapmen during the great strike of 1896.

The conflicts between upriver and downriver fishermen were just as violent.

June 21, 1890, three Columbia River Fishermen's Union members were killed in an attempt to prevent upriver fishermen near Rainier from fishing during a union-declared strike for higher prices.

Violent acts such as these were but one of the tactics used in the fights between groups of fishermen. A 1902 constitutional amendment providing for initiatives and referendums, means by which the people of the state could both make and veto laws, provided a less violent but equally effective tactic.

measure episodes was on June 1, 1908. Two initiative petitions relating to the Columbia River salmon fishery were on the ballot.



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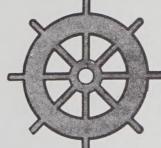
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#### Habitat video available

A new 19-minute video has recently been completed on coastal habitat and pollution problems throughout the USA.

The video, sponsored by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, is intended to provide a look at protecting important coastal habitat, vital to restoring troubled fish runs.

"No Safe Harbor" stars actor Ted Danson, who tours the country speaking with commercial and recreational fishermen, and scientists about the state of our national coastal habitat resource.

To order a copy of "No Safe Harbor," please send a check or money order for \$8, made payable to the "National Fish and Wildlife Foundation," to the F.I.S.H. program, PSMFC, 45 SE 82nd Drive, Suite 100, Gladstone, OR 97027-2522.



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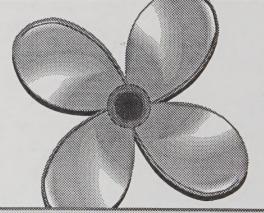
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